

## **Embracing an ecosocial worldview for climate justice and collective healing**

By: Sandra Engstrom and [Meredith C.F. Powers](#)

Engstrom, S., and Powers, M.C.F. (2021). Embracing an ecosocial worldview for climate justice and collective healing. *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis*, 3(1), 120-144.

Made available courtesy of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis*: <https://jtpp.uk/>

### **Abstract:**

We are faced with an ongoing global climate crisis, the more recent public health crisis brought on by COVID-19, increased racial and police violence, ableism, and the intersecting injustices surrounding gender and sexuality. From an autoethnographic perspective, we argue the urgent need for a shift in worldview from one that is more human-centric to an ecosocial worldview that takes into account the global connections that we can no longer ignore. An ecosocial worldview acknowledges the inextricable relationships of humans within our context of a global ecosystem. When we embrace this worldview, we can approach and address injustice and in doing so, can prove to be beneficial to and healing for both the planet and the people living in; it has to be understood as climate justice. We reflect on our journeys to an ecosocial world view and discuss how climate justice works from an ecosocial worldview, can promote the repairing of broken relationships among individuals, communities, self, and the planet. This paper shares reflections and perspectives for individual and collective healing, such as eco-therapy, gratitude, teaching, and adopting a sustainable, life-enhancing pace. These healing and reflective practices within the context of climate justice are also important factors in building and maintaining individual and community resilience to current and future crises.

**Keywords:** Ecosocial worldview | climate justice | autoethnography | social work | healing

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

**jtp**<sup>•</sup>**pp** *Journal of*  
**Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis**

ISSN 2631-746X (Print) & 2631-7478 (Online)

February 2021, Vol. 3, No. 1



The *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (JTPP) is a peer-reviewed, biannual, scholarly journal of contemplative cutting edge research and practice on subjects related to human social flourishing and peace.

---

Co-Editors: Dr Jeremy A Rinker & Dr Daniel Rhodes

Associate Editor: Nilanjan Dutta

Publisher: Abhijit Mazumder

---

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr Amii Omara-Otunnu • Dr Ashwani Kumar • Dr Bandana Purkayastha  
Dr Jacint Jordana • Dr John Doyle • Dr Lenin Raghuvanshi • Ms Michelle Ndiaye  
Dr Rahul Mukherji • Dr Shankari Sundararaman • Dr Vandana Shiva

---

*JTPP* (<https://jtp.p.uk>), bringing together peace practitioners and academics, fills an important transdisciplinary gap that exists in current academic literature.

*JTPP* endeavours to support scholarship that highlights

- the human potential for transformation,
- a holistic and collaborative approach to complex systems,
- the transdisciplinary nature of solutions to wicked social problems, and
- a shared sense of purpose in human transnational activism for positive change.

*JTPP* thus provides a dynamic forum for sharing information and experiences primarily catering to academics, and activists particularly in the disciplines of Peace and Conflict Studies, Political Science, International Relations, Human Rights, History, as well as professionals, policymakers, organisations, institutions and individuals who nurture a firm belief in peace and human rights.

*JTPP* invites SUBMISSIONS from academics, scholar-practitioners, and social activists. Please see: Author's Corner (<https://jtp.p.uk/authors-corner/>) for Submission Guidelines.

*JTPP* follows the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

For SUBSCRIPTION, please see: <https://jtp.p.uk/subscription-plan/>

---

Published by Frontpage Publications Limited (<https://frontpagepublications.com>), Level 2, 13 John Prince's Street, London W1G 0JR, in both print and online versions, in February 2021.

In association with Peace and Justice Studies Association (<https://www.peacejusticestudies.org>).

ASSOCIATES at: Delhi, Honolulu, Istanbul, Kampala, Kolkata, London, Madrid, Norwalk

## Contents

Publisher's Greetings ABHIJIT MAZUMDER	4
Our Contributors	5
Co-Editors' Welcome and Introduction JEREMY A RINKER & DANIEL RHODES	9
Re-Defining Justice and Creating Pathways for Healing: The Limits of the US Legal System and the Promise of Politicised Healing as a Model for Redressing Racialised Harm DAVID ANDERSON HOOKER & SHEILA A BEDI	17
Photography Healing and Justice in Appalachia JOE COLE	46
Addressing Clerical Sexual Abuse through Restorative Justice: A Search for Empowerment and Collective Healing JONATHAN CHUKWUEMEKA MADU	75
Traditional Livelihoods and the Idea of Gender Justice: A Study of the Minority Women of Varanasi in the Area of Art and Craft SALONI & SUSHIL KUMAR	96
Embracing an Ecosocial Worldview for Climate Justice and Collective Healing SANDRA ENGSTROM & MEREDITH C F POWERS	120
Mapping Digital Justice: Across the Great Divide, Towards a Sanctuary for All RANDALL AMSTER	145
Kaleidoscope Curated by NILANJAN DUTTA	167
Book Reviews JUSTIN HARMON, JEREMY A RINKER & CATHRYNE SCHMITZ	170

## Our Contributors

AMSTER, RANDALL, JD, PhD, is Professor & Co-Director of the Justice & Peace Studies and Environmental Studies programmes at Georgetown University, USA. His books include 'Peace Ecology' (Routledge, 2015), 'Anarchism Today' (Praeger, 2012), and 'Lost in Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness' (LFB, 2008). Amster teaches and publishes widely on subjects including peacebuilding and nonviolence, social and environmental justice, political theory and movements, and the impacts of emerging technologies. (email: [Randall.Amster@georgetown.edu](mailto:Randall.Amster@georgetown.edu))

BEDI, SHEILA A is a Professor of Law at the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and Director, Community Justice and Civil Rights Clinic. Her honours include the NAACP's Vernon Dahmer and Fannie Lou Hamer Award and the Federal District Court Excellence in Public Interest Award (N D Ill). Bedi is a co-author of a case book on prison law, *Incarceration and the Law: Cases and Materials* and she writes about race, gender, and the justice system. (email: [sheila.bedi@law.northwestern.edu](mailto:sheila.bedi@law.northwestern.edu))

COLE, JOE is an Academic Professional Assistant Professor in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. Joe holds a PhD in Philosophy from Duke University and a BS in Engineering Science from Penn State University. Joe's interests include ecovillages, sustainable community, war and ethics, conflict transformation, and racial and social justice. Joe is the author of 'Ecovillages, Sustainability, and Social and Environmental Healing', in *Realizing Nonviolent Resilience* (Peter Lang, 2020). (email: [jwcole@uncg.edu](mailto:jwcole@uncg.edu))

DUTTA, NILANJAN, Associate Editor, 'Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis', and is better known as an activist being involved in various social movements, particularly the civil liberties, environmental, anti-nuclear and peace movements. Having researched on various allied topics with fellowships from the SOAS, University of London, SARAI-CSDS and Calcutta Research Group, Nilanjan has authored, co-authored and edited a number of books on related subjects and made a few documentary films as well. (email: [nilanjan123123@rediffmail.com](mailto:nilanjan123123@rediffmail.com))

ENGSTROM, SANDRA is a Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Stirling, UK, is co-lead of the Extremes in Society research group and sits on the University Race Equality Steering Group. Her main research and teaching interests focus on social work and climate change, self-care, community resilience, trauma and mental health. Engstrom is also interested in the decolonisation of social work education and practice. (email: [sandra.engstrom@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sandra.engstrom@stir.ac.uk))

HARMON, JUSTIN, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community and Therapeutic Recreation at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA. Harmon has worked extensively in the parks, forestry and recreation fields, land and wildlife management, environmental and primary education, and community relations and outreach. His primary research threads are recreation intervention post-diagnosis of cancer, the role of music in life course development, and the intricacies of community development. (email: [jtharmo3@uncg.edu](mailto:jtharmo3@uncg.edu))

HOOKE, DAVID ANDERSON, PhD, JD, M Div, Associate Professor, Practice of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, USA. His primary research interests consider the role of narratives in identity formation, the multigenerational transmission of trauma, justice seeking, and societal transformation. Hooker is the author of *The Little Book of Transformative Community Conferencing* (SkyHorse, 2016), *Transforming Historical Harms* (with Amy Potter- Czajkowski, Eastern Mennonite, 2012) and several journal articles and book chapters. (email: [dhooker@nd.edu](mailto:dhooker@nd.edu))

KUMAR, SUSHIL, a PhD in Sociology, contributes in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility since 2005 in India. He has worked with international organisations viz. University of Gothenburg, Sweden DFID, Enterplan, Impactt Limited (London), World Bank, Rockefeller Philanthropy Associates (USA), BFA (USA), Norwegian Research Council & Overseas Development Group, ODI-London, IDPM-Manchester etc. He delivered the inaugural lecture at the Neubauer Collegium, Chicago in November 2016. (email: [susheel.chaturvedy@gmail.com](mailto:susheel.chaturvedy@gmail.com))

MADU, JONATHAN CHUKWUEMEKA holds PhD in Conflict Management & Peace Studies and has taught in many international institutions. As founder of the Centre for Promotion of Peace and Development (Nigeria), Madu currently heads the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Nigeria. He is an international postgraduate

examiner to many universities and has research interests in governance, peacebuilding and entrepreneurship. Among his publications is *Nonviolent Transformation of Socio-cultural Conflict* (Germany: LAP, 2012). (email: jnthn.madu@gmail.com)

POWERS, MEREDITH C F is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work and a Sustainability Faculty Fellow at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA. She is a community engaged scholar, presenting her research nationally and internationally, and teaches about social work with immigrants and refugee populations, diversity, equity and inclusion, and environmental justice. She has co-authored and co-edited a growing body of work on climate justice and the ecosocial worldview. (email: MCFPowers@uncg.edu)

RHODES, DANIEL, Co-Editor of the 'Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis', is the Director, Undergraduate Social Work Programme at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA. A PhD in Cultural Studies with a Graduate Certificate in Women and Gender Studies from the UNC-Greensboro in 2008, Daniel obtained his Master's in Social Work from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1996 and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Daniel has been engaged in community-based work in mental health, therapeutic foster care, and working with immigrants and refugees. (email: dtrhodes@uncg.edu)

RINKER, JEREMY A, PhD, Co-Editor of the 'Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis', is Assistant Professor & Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Peace & Conflict Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA where he researches the intersections between narrative and nonviolent social change. Jeremy's research interests revolve around the centrality of justice discourse, trauma awareness, and collective resilience in movements aimed at transforming social conflict, historical injustices, and structural violence. His publications include 'Identity, Rights, and Awareness: Anticaste Activism in India and the Awakening of Justice through Discursive Practices' (Lexington, USA, 2018), 'Realizing Nonviolent Resilience: Neoliberalism, Societal Trauma, and Marginalized Voice' (with Jerry Lawler, Peter Lang, 2020). (email: jr@jtpp.uk / jarinker@uncg.edu)

SALONI, a PhD, in Sociology, is an Assistant Professor of Sociology in one of the prestigious colleges for girls in Uttar Pradesh, India. 'Gender Issues' and 'Lived Religion', particularly in India, have been her focus area in the field

of academics and social science research. At present Saloni is writing a book on Varanasi covering 'Religious Myths and Religiosity: A Case of Hindu Women in Varanasi'. (email: tiwarisaloni8@gmail.com)

SCHMITZ, CATHRYNE L is Professor Emerita in the Department of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA. Schmitz's scholarship focuses on critical multiculturalism, environmental justice, intercultural education, organisational/community transformation, gender studies and peacebuilding. Her publications include 'Critical Multiculturalism and Intersectionality in a Complex World' (OUP, 2018), 'Transformative Change: An Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies' (Lexington, 2015). (email: clschmit@uncg.edu)



All articles published in this journal are copyright protected.  
Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study or review,  
no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or introduced into  
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means  
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise)  
without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any  
person who does any contravention in relation to this  
publication, under the Copyright, Designs and  
Patents Act 1988, may be liable to criminal  
prosecution and civil claims for damages.

# Embracing an Ecosocial Worldview for Climate Justice and Collective Healing

Sandra Engstrom & Meredith C F Powers

## ABSTRACT

We are faced with an ongoing global climate crisis, the more recent public health crisis brought on by COVID-19, increased racial and police violence, ableism, and the intersecting injustices surrounding gender and sexuality. From an autoethnographic perspective, we argue the urgent need for a shift in worldview from one that is more human-centric to an ecosocial worldview that takes into account the global connections that we can no longer ignore. An ecosocial worldview acknowledges the inextricable relationships of humans within our context of a global ecosystem. When we embrace this worldview, we can approach and address injustice and in doing so, can prove to be beneficial to and healing for both the planet and the people living in; it has to be understood as climate justice. We reflect on our journeys to an ecosocial world view and discuss how climate justice works from an ecosocial worldview, can promote the repairing of broken relationships among individuals, communities, self, and the planet. This paper shares reflections and perspectives for individual and collective healing, such as eco-therapy, gratitude, teaching, and adopting a sustainable, life-enhancing pace. These healing and reflective practices within the context of climate justice are also important factors in building and maintaining individual and community resilience to current and future crises.

## KEYWORDS

Ecosocial worldview, climate justice, autoethnography, social work, healing

## INTRODUCTION

We would like to start with a recognition of gratitude, first, for Mother Nature who sustains us and revives us physically and emotionally, for the privilege to have this opportunity for contemplation of the many scholars and leaders who have come before us, and for the opportunity to collaborate over the years despite the distance and distractions. Also, we are grateful to the readers for joining us on this

journey as they consider their worldview, the potential to embrace an ecosocial worldview, and how it can promote their own healing, collective healing, and specifically their involvement in creating climate justice.

Globally, we are experiencing a convergence of chronic and complex injustices, including colonialism, ableism, oppression, and violence based on race, gender and sexuality, structural inequality, and climate injustice (Canty, 2017; D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2014; Spencer, M S, Fentress, T, Touch, A & Hernandez, J, 2020). These converge with the recent global health pandemic of COVID-19 and the resulting economic repercussions (Amadasun, 2020; Lavalette, Ioakimidis & Ferguson, 2020). At the time of writing this paper, there have been over 68 million confirmed cases and over 1.5 million deaths as a result of COVID-19 and the numbers are increasing exponentially (WHO, 2020).

Due to the potential lethal spread of the virus, health and mental health suffering are exacerbated as many people are unable to rely upon known support systems, such as meeting with and enjoying close contact with family, friends, and support groups. Many have had to limit their movement, even within their homes and communities, having little to no contact with neighbours or connections in nature. Others have had to carry on, as frontline, essential workers, risking their health and mental health in care of others. Many experience the impacts of these injustices differently due to structural inequalities that deprive the majority of the world. However, these disparities are not merely 'risk factors', as some may euphemistically call them, rather 'indicators of oppression' (Flores, 2020) that must be recognised and addressed as such. The consequences of staying the course on our current trajectory are wide-ranging for all species and the planet itself, ranging from overpopulation, displacement, and forced migration due to scarcity of viable air, water, and land that will sustain life, and extinction. The current context is further evidence of the likelihood of increasing pandemics related to zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014).

Due to all this, our 'surge capacity', a collection of adaptive systems that humans draw on for short-term survival in stressful situations, is increasingly depleted (Halle, 2020). This is because we are burdened by so much ongoing and anticipatory grief, including ambiguous loss, with no end in sight and no way to fathom what could be lost. These complex problems are chronic, ongoing stressors, or 'wicked problems' (Koloko, 2012) that must be rectified, despite the difficulties in where to start. The challenge to prioritise what to deal with and in what order can result in mental paralysis, increasing mental and physical distress and illness. Social workers have expertise and skill-sets to offer as they often operate in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, but the impact on the social workers themselves has also been exacerbated in the current context (Lavalette, Ioakimidis & Ferguson, 2020). One angle that we, the authors, approach these wicked problems

The challenge to prioritise what to deal with and in what order can result in mental paralysis, increasing mental and physical distress and illness. Social workers have expertise and skill-sets to offer as they often operate in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, but the impact on the social workers themselves has also been exacerbated in the current context.

is through our work on climate justice. Through what we call ‘radical self-care’ (Lorde, 1988; Powers & Engstrom, 2020), we have found we can often overcome our mental paralysis and promote our healing as we work towards collective healing through climate justice in our roles as social work teachers and community engaged researchers. We define climate justice broadly as approaches and actions that address injustices to the entire ecosystem, which includes all species, humans merely being one (Powers, Rambaree & Peeters, 2019). Environmental justice is one aspect under the broader umbrella of climate justice, being the narrower and specific justice issues related to how humans are impacted by the environment (Bullard, 1994).

It is undeniable that our world is inextricably connected. The current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while an ongoing tragedy, has also created space and time that allows us to intentionally and explicitly slow down to re-evaluate the current systems and processes upon which we rely. Instead of blindly perpetuating the structures and practices that resulted in the injustices we fight, we can take this moment to pause and establish a new normal. As writer and activist, Sonya Renee Taylor (2020) proclaimed,

We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate, and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

Increasingly, research and arguments have called for this slowing of our life pace and changing our ways as we reassess, mitigate, and redress the damage that humans have done, and continue to do, to the environment and each other (Dominelli, 2012; Peeters, 2012; Powers & Engstrom, 2020; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Much of the current injustices of oppression, over-consumerism, exploitation, and materialistic practices are the result of structures and systems

based on a human-centric worldview, where humans are seen as the centre of all relationships and prioritised over other species and the ecosystem (Dominelli, 2012; Rambaree, Powers & Smith, 2019). Thus, we must embrace an ecosocial worldview, which acknowledges the inextricable relationship between all life on this planet, including humans and more than humans. The ecosocial worldview or lens requires us to critically examine and question our current societal structures, practices, policies, routines, values, life-pace, and patterns of production and consumption. We recognise that we are entrenched in this temporal and physical context through global connectedness, along with the reader.

As leaders at the nexus of climate justice and social work, we are trying to be transparent about our struggles and ways of coping as we move beyond paralysis to action. We present our journeys of embracing an ecosocial worldview and how it has informed our practice to create true climate justice and collective healing. This paper contributes uniquely to the discussion and ongoing research in today's context as we share our particular voices on the ways we are impacted and are trying to make impacts. We acknowledge that we are also among those that require healing and we intentionally situate our voices and experiences in the broader discussions and research (Canty, 2017; Powers & Engstrom, 2020; Schultz et al, 2016; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). This is why we have chosen to write this article from an autoethnographic perspective. We are not trying to add to the method of autoethnography, rather we are creating this collaborative autoethnography as a way to explicitly practise radical self-care as we promote the embracing of an ecosocial worldview in social work and the broader climate justice discourse. To this end, we also present our work in community engaged practice and research using an ecosocial worldview and discuss ways we are centring ecosocial worldview in the profession at large and within teaching. Without embracing an ecosocial worldview, we are doomed to our current trajectory of injustice and certain global demise. But, if we, and future generations, embrace an ecosocial worldview, we can change our individual and structural practices to promote authentic healing, especially concerning climate justice.

## METHODOLOGY

As stated, we have chosen to write this article from an autoethnographic standpoint. This is due to our intimate experiences with the topics and our own need for radical self-care. The framework and process of combined autoethnography provided an additional structured space in which to reflect upon individually, and in conversation (Schon, 1983), about how the more we adopted this ecosocial worldview, the more we gained true hope that this is the way the world will ultimately be healed and bring about climate justice. The process of combined

Autoethnography is an approach to writing and research that seeks to understand cultural experiences whilst systematically analysing personal experiences displays multiple layers of consciousness, and can encourage acts of witnessing to build empathy and connection to promote healing for those most directly impacted, as well as for those more indirectly impacted.

autoethnography was, and remains, an act of radical self-care for the both of us. Writing our stories was therapeutic as we sought to make sense of ourselves, our experiences and questioned conventional storylines about how we should live (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001). This is more than mere reflection and dialogue, rather we utilised autoethnography as a mindfulness practice that promotes radical self-care as it moves us to action and impacting change on the very things that are causing us distress in the first place (Powers & Engstrom, 2020) and in recognition that we are more than mere researchers or academics in this context (Canty, 2017). This is also in part due to our agreement that an autoethnography demonstrates our commitment to revealing socio-cultural inequities, injustices, and

oppressive practices, including how they are reproduced and resisted, and what might be done to facilitate change and make a difference in the world (Ellis, 1999; Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008; Smith, 2017). These are commitments that stem from the ecosocial worldview we embrace.

Autoethnography is an approach to writing and research that seeks to understand cultural experiences whilst systematically analysing personal experiences (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001), displays multiple layers of consciousness, and can encourage acts of witnessing to build empathy and connection to promote healing for those most directly impacted, as well as for those more indirectly impacted (e.g., witnesses) (Smith, 2017). It is this empathy and connection that we are hoping to evoke in the reader with our writing. The focus of general disability moves from respondents to readers in autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001) as there is a hope that our truth is responded to with intentional reflection and recognition such that the reader, also, recognises their intimate connections to climate justice.

Critical elements of autoethnography are woven throughout this article to strengthen how this process relates to our understanding and experiences of climate justice. First, there is the use of storytelling. People are storytelling creatures and need stories to help make the world meaningful and provide a template to make sense of what we pay attention to and respond to (Smith, 2017). We believe

that ignoring stories would disregard an essential part of how humans can live in society and work towards meaningful change. Second, there are the elements of note-taking, memory work, narrative writing, and interview (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008). We are, both, regular journal keepers, regularly practise eco-photography, and intentionally and mindfully situate ourselves in the natural world regularly for eco-therapy, as will be reflected upon below. Also, throughout the writing of this article, we interviewed each other and supported deeper reflection about how we came to understand an ecosocial worldview, how we engage in our lives, both personally and professionally, from an ecosocial worldview, and what work we are doing to fight for climate justice and promote healing. In other words, coming together on this writing from a collaborative autoethnographic stance also enabled us to reflect on how we individually already engage in regular autoethnographic practices without putting a label on it. Unknowingly, we were ascribing to the belief that 'autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, reflexively' (Ellis, 2013). This only deepened our interest in creating this article in a way that emphasises the importance of being deeply situated and integrated within an ecosocial worldview to work towards climate justice for our individual and collective healing.

We also ensured the incorporation of the process and reflection of time and space within our writing. Autoethnography can alter an individual's perception of one's past, present and inform one's future (Custer, 2014). Ellis (1999) wrote that an individual can 'zoom backward and forward, inward and outward' as one gazes through various lenses, voices and experiences to gain insight and expose a self that has been impacted by history, social structure, dialogue and institutions. For several years, we have discussed and reflected on our upbringings, our professional and personal practices, and our interactions with each other, others, and the natural world. Thus, we have been able to sustain focus and concentration on our knowledge and experiences over time (Wall, 2006).

We acknowledge the critiques of autoethnography as being insufficiently rigorous; however, we are more strongly pulled to the strength of the method as autoethnography was partially developed to counter and resist colonialist, sterile research that can be exploitive and advocates patriarchal, heterosexual and white biases (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001; Oswald, Bussey & Thompson, 2020). We believe that researchers must continually challenge and push methodological boundaries (Taber, 2010), especially when it comes to complex global issues, such as climate justice, that call for radical self-care including introspection, reflection, analytical and emotional responses to change the world for the better. Upon further reflection together, we believe it is precisely because we embrace an ecosocial worldview that autoethnography appealed to us as we seek to disrupt

and transform through decolonisation, eco-feminism, anti-racism and degrowth.

## COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING AND MEANING-MAKING

As we are two separate voices, we are specifically creating a collaborative autoethnography. Combined autoethnography allows us to create a collaborative story as we make meaning of the data; ‘the analysis itself is a form of storytelling’ (Smith, 2017). Humans are storytelling beings (Frank, 2010; Smith, 2017). We can attest to the power of story and endeavour to moving the conversation forward in the global context of stories which are interwoven with our relatives, the plants, animals, land, water, air, and Mother Nature. Additionally, we concur with Ellis, Adams and Bohner (2001) who state that ‘autoethnographers value narrative truth based on what a story of experience does, how it is used, understood, and responded to for and by us and others, as writers, participants, audiences and humans’ (282). We believe that combining and sharing our collaborative story mimics, Senehi’s (2008) belief is that narratives can enhance peace (or in this case, an ecosocial world view); engender mutual recognition and promote consciousness raising that ensures collective perspectives to interrogate a social phenomenon, creates a unique synergy that we could not attain in isolation, and supports a shift from individual to a collective agency (Chang et al, 2012; Lapadat, 2017). We also agree with Oswald, Bussey and Thompson (2020) that such collaboration provides solidarity and group identity that transcends individual, institutional and international boundaries. This solidarity has provided mentorship and support as we continue to navigate healing in ourselves, the world, and fighting for climate justice.

We set for ourselves the following research questions to guide our collaborative autoethnographic process:

- ❖ How did we come to understand an ecosocial worldview?
- ❖ How does this inform our academic and professional practice?
- ❖ How does our ecological worldview lead us to promote climate justice?

We thought the following suggested question was beyond the scope of this paper and more related to our role as educators and have incorporated this idea into our conclusion about the next step in terms of research and writing.

- ❖ What does our practice tell us about how effective we are in changing hearts and minds around issues of climate justice?

Moving forward, we encourage the exploration of the effectiveness of embracing an ecosocial worldview on climate justice and, also, how our efforts may be contributing to this positive change.



We first discussed these questions, informally interviewing each other, then separately we each wrote a reflective narrative in response to these research questions. Then we came back together to discuss, analyse, probe each other to go deeper. During this time, we made some expected and unexpected findings. At times these will be presented individually; otherwise, we will combine our findings to showcase the effect of relationship and autoethnographic collaboration in generating knowledge. We utilised video conferencing, email exchanges and a shared Google document to analyse our data from our individual and collective perspectives. This allowed us to co-create a multi-layered story and investigate our collective experiences which resulted in the themes that will be presented in the remainder of the paper.

As friends for several years, there were no substantial tensions or difficulties in this process. However, there were aspects of our mental health and well-being that needed to be tended to that, at times, would prevent us from writing collaboratively. We had originally planned for this article to be written earlier in the year, however, amid the current COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing crises, various pressing health and capacity needs took priority. This additional time, however, allowed for further deepening and enriching our process of bringing our voices together. As we collaborated, we were also tapping into the mutual support we so desperately needed to promote our own individual healing as we also completed the collaborative autoethnography and writing tasks.

### *Positionality*

It is important to note our positionality as autoethnographers. Both authors are of the same generation, White, cisgender females, from North America, although one has been living in the UK for ten years. We, both, have earned PhDs in social work and have extensive practice experience, totalling over 35 years of expertise between us. We are both currently academic scholars, working as professors in formal academic settings (Scotland and the USA). While on paper we may seem similar, there are significant differences in how we were raised, our lived experiences, our social work academic journeys, our practice as social workers, and importantly, how we came to an ecosocial worldview at different stages of life. There are also differences between our current and historical national contexts, our familial configurations, as well as how we engage with our grief, anxiety, and other emotions related to the widespread convergence of injustices. These similarities and differences allowed for the analysis to be multidimensional and supported a deeper more analytical component (Lapadat, 2017).

We became acquainted through global, professional networking opportunities in the Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network and the International Federation

of Social Workers (IFSW). Together, we have been leaders in the advancement of ecosocial worldviews and climate justice in the social work profession and beyond. We both found ourselves navigating life as new professors and academic scholars amid, more often than not, unrealistic expectations (e.g., quantity and production levels). We were each, individually, questioning and trying to prioritise our own needs for health and healing, however, were finding little support. We were drawn to each other as a result of recognising our similar values of pushing back against this unhealthy atmosphere and found sustaining solidarity. Since then, together we have sought to disrupt and transform those spaces, beginning with creating our own, mutually supportive space of respect, which honours and nurtures the health and wellness we deserve but are not apt to get from our broader contexts. To this end, we have collaborated on presentations, articles, and books. Perhaps even more important than the successful outcomes, we pride ourselves in the collaborative process of going at a sustainable, life-enhancing pace, that promotes health, honours and respects our need to seek times to connect with nature to re-centre and is truly nurturing and mutually supportive. We see this paper as a sequel to our most recent collaboration on an article called ‘Radical Self-Care for Social Workers in the Global Climate Crisis’, where we presented the idea of developing a sustainable, life-enhancing pace (2020).

## HOW WE CAME TO EMBRACE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

Acknowledging that autoethnography is both a process and a product (Ellis, 1999), we now present some of our autoethnographic data to render visible the social and temporal locations that individually led us to support and situate ourselves in an ecosocial worldview and the recognition of the importance of this on climate justice.

Sandra: Growing up in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, it was quite rare that a month would go by that my family did not spend time outdoors or outside camping, hiking or skiing. As a child and young person, I didn’t put a lot of thought into what this meant towards my development or wellbeing, other than the fact of initially not liking it and always wanting to know when we would go home. Looking back I can see that spending

Even now, in the context of having my ‘wings clipped’, so to speak, as I am not able to travel back to Canada due to the COVID-19 crisis, I feel an ache in my body at not being able to spend time in the mountains or to be surrounded by the familiar forest sounds and smells.

so much time outdoors when I was younger, and today, has a direct influence as to how I see and interact with the world. Even now, in the context of having my 'wings clipped', so to speak, as I am not able to travel back to Canada due to the COVID-19 crisis, I feel an ache in my body at not being able to spend time in the mountains or to be surrounded by the familiar forest sounds and smells.

Reflecting on this personal dimension of how I understand and relate to the natural environment, I can now see it as central to an ecosocial worldview. My truth and my identity are so interwoven with the natural world that at times I do not know where one begins and the other ends. I am the mountains and the mountains are me. I remember later in my studies reading Joanna Macy (2007), E O Wilson (1993) and Fred Besthorn (2002) and feeling an emotional connection with their writing and agreeing with the biophilia hypothesis and deep ecology, that all living things have intrinsic value and that humans have an innate tendency to seek out nature. I can now see that this is exactly the experience I needed to have to later be able to reflect on the healing that desperately needs to occur within ourselves and the healing of the natural world, let alone the healing of that relationship between the two.

I recently spent an extended time with an isolated group in the woods and one of our tasks was to look at a tree, flower, blade of grass, or another piece of the natural world and ask this natural being one simple question 'What is your secret to living in perfect harmony?' For every natural, non-human entity seems to have an innate system in place to live its life in perfect balance with everything in its surroundings. I return to this practice regularly now that I am back in the city due to the impressively powerful conversations that emerged when I asked a tree and a moss-covered rock that question. Being consciously aware of this interconnected relationship between my humanity and the natural world strengthens the understanding of how my well-being and the well-being of others are dependent upon the collective well-being of and justice for all living things. This process of writing and reflecting on my experiences brings with it an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness and interdependence which could potentially be a challenge to those that have not been able to have this connection or have avoided this relationship and practice for so long. Emotions linked to shame, guilt or anxiety could emerge as there is an increased awareness of how we have failed the earth, failed ourselves; I know I have these feelings at times. It can be overwhelming to think about how to navigate these conversations and feelings and I'm grateful that psychologists and other health professionals have started to acknowledge the importance of spending time in nature and how this can help with processing these emotions. It seems as though we are now being forced by these 'wicked' problems, by COVID-19 and by the climate crisis, to question fundamental assumptions and economic and societal messages that we

are confronted with daily and this is an uncomfortable place to be in. However, we need to feel this discomfort to transform our relationship to other species, change our frame of reference to that of connection and interdependency, towards understanding and interacting with the planet and move forward with our moral responsibilities.

MEREDITH: Though not brought up with an ecosocial worldview in my culture of origin, I was taught to cherish and respect our natural world, seeing it as a gift that we were entrusted to be good stewards of. I have always turned to nature for my refuelling and re-centring when my world feels like it is spinning out of control, and to prevent myself from getting to such a poor mental and physical state. I do this in many ways, but particularly by getting muddy with pottery or trail hiking. Being with nature brings me greater mental clarity and peace and recalibrates my rhythms as I begin to remember what is important, and what is not. Early in my career as a social worker, working with refugees, I quickly became burnt out. And, the pace of the culture in which I live continues to propel me into stress and burnout. Thus, for over two decades I have been learning (and unlearning) for myself and teaching other social workers about stress, burnout, and the need for a sustainable, life-enhancing pace (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). In navigating the demands of such a busy life of work and family responsibilities, I have come to love the quote that anchors me in an ecosocial worldview, ‘Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished’—Lao Tzu. Similarly, a friend recently, knowing my passion for the degrowth movement (D’Alisa et al, 2014), said, ‘Meredith, you need to degrow your agenda’. Now, by learning to embrace an ecosocial worldview, I often must re-educate myself and often remind myself, I am not in nature or reconnecting to nature, but I am part of nature and can go at the pace of nature. I have learned, we are not able to disconnect from nature, rather are simply reinvigorating our connections, or becoming more mindful of them. During my Master’s in social work programme, I had an epiphany about the professional roles and responsibilities to address the environmental crisis beyond my passions. I came to this realisation in one elective class on social work and sustainability, taught by my amazing professor and now friend and mentor, Dee Gamble. This not only shifted the entire trajectory of my social work career but also began my recognising of my human-centric worldview and gradually embracing an ecosocial worldview throughout my doctoral programme and beyond. Additionally, my shift towards this ecosocial worldview has also broadened my work to climate justice from my original work more narrowly addressing the human-centred injustices of environmental justice.

For my dissertation, I did qualitative research on why and how social workers were addressing the environmental crisis in their professional roles. For the literature

review, I found and cherished the work of Fred Besthorn on deep ecology (2002), Lena Dominelli on green social work (2012), Nancy Mary on sustainability in social work (2008), Kati Nahri and Aila-Leena Mattheis on ecosocial work (2001), Jef Peeters on ecosocial work and sustainable development (2012), Kim Zapf on people as place (2009) and so many, many more. I was beyond thrilled to find that I was not alone, that there was so much amazing scholarship and thought developed in this arena! I was truly humbled to be standing on the shoulders of giants. Additionally, I was amazed to learn that the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (2010-2020)* had included as one of the four pillars, the promotion of sustainable communities and environments (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2012). While I was relieved that I was not alone, it also deeply saddened and troubled me that I had not had much exposure to these ideas during my own formal social work education.

Since then, I have been continuing my journey of embracing an ecosocial worldview. I am humbled and awed to learn from the writings by indigenous scholars, for example, Miriama Scott, who wrote the foreword to our second volume of a co-edited workbook series (2018), and Robin Wall Kimmerer, who wrote one of my all-time favourite books, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013). I have been honoured to collaborate with such fantastic colleagues from around the world, who challenge me to keep learning and growing as we move the conversations forward within and beyond social work.

On my journey of embracing an ecosocial worldview, I began to feel even more compelled to teach and help professionally socialise social workers to embrace an ecosocial worldview, an expanded person-environment framework, and their roles and responsibilities to promote climate justice. My healing has continued even during the current, intersecting crises, as I have opportunities to connect with nature and as I feel I am making an impact on the lives of my family, my students, my community, and the profession at large through my climate justice work.

## COLLABORATIVE MEANING MAKING

Collaborative meaning-making addresses some of the critical gaps in the knowledge field related to how an ecosocial worldview can help one promote one's healing, collective healing and climate justice (Boetto, 2017; Boetto, et al, 2020; Canty 2017; Powers, 2016). Our collaborative autoethnographic journey of comparing and contrasting our individual reflections allowed us to analyse our narratives and experiences, and see certain themes emerge. Specifically found the *why* and *how* we apply an ecosocial worldview in our practice as teachers and community engaged scholars and researchers were of key importance. Our data supports the

previous research by Meredith on pathways and responses to the environmental crisis (Powers, 2016), which we will explicitly discuss in the following sections.

## ‘WHY’ WE NEED TO EMBRACE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW IN OUR PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

As social workers, we are taught to see how things are interconnected and to work with the whole system, not just an individual’s ‘presenting problem’, known as the person-in-environment framework (Germain & Gitterman, 1980). We often work in situations to intervene with service consumers when their environment is no longer healthy or sustainable, such as in a case of domestic violence, where we would support and encourage the person to move out of harm’s way, while also working to provide intervention services to the victim and perpetrator. Or, in a case with an older adult who may desire to move from their home to an assisted living facility for increased health care and socialisation benefits. However, often mainstream social work education teaches this person-in-environment framework more narrowly, focusing exclusively on social, political and economic environments and excluding the physical environment, both built and natural (Powers, 2016). However, if we embrace an ecosocial worldview, we can take a broader person-in-environment framework (e.g., ‘people as place’ by Zapf, 2009) that allows us to acknowledge and address the whole context of problems that involve the social, political, economic *and* ecological environments (Berger & Kelly, 1993; Besthorn, 2002; Boetto, 2017; Coates, 2003; Domenilli, 2012; Matthies, Närhi & Ward, 2001; Powers, 2016; Soine, 1987; Weick, 1981; Zapf, 2009).

For example, through this ecosocial worldview and broader person-environment framework, we can see the connections between climate change and migration, such as with regards to the conflict in Syria, as water and climatic conditions have played a clear role in the deterioration of conditions (Gleick, 2014). From this lens we can see these experiences of political unrest, war, famine, disaster, economic hardship, and more, lead back to the environment, and are exacerbated by climate change. Whether the environment was slowly degrading and becoming inhospitable for growing crops and sustaining livelihood, or whether people were fighting over natural resources, either locally or with international political powers at play, or whether there was a catastrophic disaster—these environmental issues all led to migration under duress (Powers, et al, 2018).

From our autoethnographic analysis, we found that we specifically varied on our pathways to embracing an ecosocial worldview (Powers, 2016). Sandra came to the profession of social work with it, and thus as she learned about the profession, she interpreted the person-environment framework and understood social work roles and responsibilities through that lens. Additionally, she had professors, such as Kim

Zapf, who promoted an ecosocial worldview throughout her formal education. Meredith on the other hand had what she calls an ‘epiphany moment’ when it dawned on her during her sole class that offered an ecosocial worldview (an elective on social work and sustainability in her Master’s programme). This epiphany showed her that she had been limited through a human-centric worldview during her formalised education and culture, which in turn shaped how she viewed a narrower person-in-environment framework and narrower social work roles and responsibilities that excluded the physical environment, both natural and built. However, since embracing an ecosocial worldview she began to see how she, and others, could *and should* adopt this broader understanding of the framework, roles, and responsibilities that include a response to climate injustices. These differences, while subtle, have motivated us differently in how we approach our work on climate justice. Sandra, rightly, continues to make automatic connections and assumptions from an ecosocial worldview, but would at times forget that these are not necessarily the perspective of her students, other social workers, or the world at large as she addresses climate justice. However, through this autoethnography journey, she has been reminded of various perspectives and can help challenge human-centric worldviews of others to promote an ecosocial worldview for climate justice and healing (Engstrom, 2019). Meredith on the other hand, having made this shift in worldview later in life, and specifically about social work in climate justice, wants to help others avoid missing out on what she felt was missing in her professional socialisation. She has been ‘shouting it from the rooftops’ and seeking every possible avenue to help other social workers who do not already embrace an ecosocial worldview. She not only explicitly teaches social work students an ecosocial worldview (more details presented below), but has also worked tirelessly to disseminate at local, national, and international levels within the professional social work bodies (e.g., National Association of Social Workers, International Federation of Social Workers) via newsletters, journal articles, co-edited book series, conference presentations and founding and directing the IFSW Climate Justice Program. In analysing our various pathways to embracing the ecosocial worldview, we are both better equipped to help others reflect on their worldviews and discover if they need to shift to embrace an ecosocial worldview to help them better work towards climate justice and healing.

## ‘HOW’ WE PRACTISE AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

We have both seen first-hand the benefits of eco-therapeutic activities, such as spending time in nature, in terms of the impact that it has on personal awareness and sense of self, and as a form of radical self-care in times of climate crisis (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). Utilising eco-therapy allows reflection on how we interact with



Humans cannot exist apart from their place in the ecosystem and universe. If there is a resistance to recognising a high power, perhaps gratitude can instead be focused on Mother Nature, the animals and plants, all species, and more than human beings that sustain our life.

others and is mindful of our deeper connection to nature and about being curious about the human-nature relationship, as well as human-human relationships (Jordan & Hinds, 2016). Throughout our years of conversations since meeting each other, we believe that holding an ecosocial worldview recognises the relationships that are central to 'living in perfect harmony' and brings an understanding that more people who have this worldview, and who show gratitude to all beings for performing the role they were designed to perform, will allow for deeper and more sustainable, individual and collective healing.

Thiebault (2011) states that a change in consciousness is needed (for those who do not already hold an ecosocial worldview) that allows

us to find a sense of wonderment and display gratitude towards nature. This shift needs to involve a deep reflection on human fulfilment and discovery of their true identity as a human species within ecology that leads us to reconsider our relationships with all beings and the natural environment. Without this shift, it seems unlikely that the appreciation, respect and gratitude needed to heal the planet will emerge as central values in human experience. Only this deep-rooted shift and experience will allow us to get a glimpse as to who we are, what the universe and natural world represents, and how to act accordingly. For example, Meredith's epiphany moment, described above, led to her shift in worldview and then her understanding of professional framework, roles and responsibilities related to climate justice.

Humans cannot exist apart from their place in the ecosystem and universe. If there is a resistance to recognising a high power, perhaps gratitude can instead be focused on Mother Nature, the animals and plants, all species, and more than human beings that sustain our life. We have both read *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013). Her exquisite writing on gratitude resonated deeply in our relation to an ecosocial worldview. Through our discussions, we agreed with Wall Kimmerer that gratitude is not a radical idea for cultures that do not follow a mainstream, human-centric worldview. Many indigenous peoples across the world, despite a vast amount of cultural differences, are rooted in cultures of gratitude, as opposed to the American and Scottish cultures in which we are situated. We especially would like to highlight and give gratitude to those that



shared the knowledge of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address Greetings to the Natural World, which came to our attention through Wall Kimmerer (2013). This address, in Haudenosaunee territory, is spoken whenever people gathered, no matter the size of the group, before anything else is done (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). This invocation of gratitude sets gratitude as the highest priority and reminds you every day that you have enough, that everything you need to sustain life is already here and accounted for; something to be immensely grateful for.

SANDRA states: A gratitude practice allows me to shift my perspective and remind myself that no matter what is going on in the world, I have things I can be grateful for. When I practise gratitude in a way that focuses my attention on knowing that everything I have and everything that I need to sustain myself is already in my life, I can disengage, even if only for a moment, with wider societal structures that emphasise over-consumerism, materialism and exploitation.

#### HOW WE PRACTISE: EXAMPLES FROM OUR EXPERTISE

We acknowledge that we navigate multiple roles simultaneously: academic, practitioner, activist, global citizen, conservationist; however, these roles increasingly overlap and more urgently demand our attention as these global crises become more frequent and widespread. We see embracing an ecosocial worldview as being the starting point for creating climate justice and healing, for ourselves, for others as individuals, for our ecosystem. By embracing an ecosocial worldview, and seeing the expanded person-environment connections, for example through a gratitude practice, we will then further recognise the need to include all voices equitably to share their expertise on what they need for justice and health in their own individual lives and communities. Equity can no longer be something we only give lip service to, while those in power never truly share the power, rather seek to keep the status quo. We must involve all people, especially those most impacted by climate injustices in decision making processes and actions for collective solutions. We must have equitable processes if we are to have equitable outcomes. We must also find ways to move to action, this is not just a time to acknowledge our grief and despair; rather we have the opportunity to create real change to tackle structural inequalities, through working amid our grief and despair as we embrace radical self-care (Powers & Engstrom, 2020).

Below, we offer practice examples from our expertise and experiences which highlight the themes from our autoethnographic analysis of how we embrace an ecosocial worldview in our work towards climate justice. This includes community engaged scholarship and research, professional networking and dissemination to impacting the profession at large, including as we teach future social work professionals.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH FROM AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW

SANDRA notes: Working with the communities in the community resilience project highlighted to me the role that we all have to play in combating climate change. I know just as well as anyone else how paralysing it is to think about the long-term consequences of our past and current actions on the natural environment. The unfairness of it all can bring an overwhelming expression of anger and sadness. I know I am just one person, but when I reflect on my daily habits, and my passion to work with communities to support each other and make sustainable changes, I feel stronger and better able to handle whatever comes. Reflecting on this mindset and process, I now believe that this is because I've had this ecosocial world view for as long as I can remember. I've been able to rely on the strength and feeling of being grounded that it has provided me through some tough times.

One of Sandra's primary research interests is looking at community resilience to climate change (Engstrom, Docherty & Robertson, 2019). Engaging with community groups and stakeholders allows her to encourage others to see their connection to the natural world and develop their ecosocial worldview. Nationally and internationally, this has broadened the conversation about what is our relationship to the natural world and how has this impacted our day to day lives. Communities around the world are starting to feel the brunt of extreme climate change related weather events. Recently, she ran a series of workshops that brought community groups that are primarily impacted by climate injustices in Scotland, government officials and academics together to evaluate and conceptualise what community resilience looked like for some of the recent extreme weather such as flooding and a significant snowstorm in 2017. Specifically, the concepts of shared memory and connections were shown to promote resilience. This was not necessarily only between human to human relationships but was also in regards to human and non-human relationships. These results coincided with the concepts of place attachment (Raymond, Brown & Weber, 2010) and biophilia (Wilson, 1993), which reflect the idea that these communities and individuals have emotional connections to the natural world which is one aspect of an ecosocial worldview.

Meredith offers another example of a community engagement project, that provides not only a way to work towards collective healing and climate justice, but also provides eco-therapy for those who are typically denied access to nature. She has recently initiated a memorial garden project in her local community, 'The Service and Bravery Commemorative Garden' (SBC Garden) to honouring military service members and veterans who are transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary.

To this end, MEREDITH notes: Working on the SBC Garden project for the past few months has been my saving grace. It makes me feel like I'm making a difference in my community, creating climate justice and opportunities for my healing as well as others it will serve. It allows me to connect with and bring people together, it has helped me, an avid globe trotter, feel anchored to my hometown, it has offered me opportunities to teach my child, as I bring her along for social distance meetings at existing garden spaces as I meet community partners to learn more.

The SBC Garden is tentatively set to celebrate its grand opening mid-year in 2021. The SBC Garden will foster opportunities for individual and collective contemplation, reflection, healing, care and growth as community members are invited to enjoy the garden, as well as opportunities to assist in maintaining it. This is key in addressing structural inequalities that deprive the majority of the world from accessing nature as a healing tool. As it will be located in an urban, downtown, public space, the SBC Garden will be very visible and attractive, benefiting the entire community by creating eco-therapeutic space to sit, stroll or meet others for contemplation and celebration of honouring the whole self and the beauty of the ongoing journey of becoming, of progress, and of dynamic life-cycles in the ecosystem and in the lives of individuals and the community. Additionally, permaculture gardens fall in line with an ecosocial worldview with the ethics to promote people care, earth care and fair share as the approach to gardening/landscaping.

## CENTRING AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW IN THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

Together we have collaborated on multiple efforts to impact the social work profession at large and help it to embrace an ecosocial worldview and mainstream the actions and roles of social workers to promote climate justice. For example, soon after Meredith founded the Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network, Sandra and she began connecting and expanding the group's platforms and began co-administering it on Facebook, Twitter, and as a Google group. Additionally, Meredith and her co-editor, Michaela Rinkel, approached IFSW to publish what became a three-volume workbook series (Powers & Rinkel, 2017, 2019; Rinkel & Powers, 2018), leading her to partner with Sandra as a contributing author (see volume 1; free pdf downloads of all workbooks at <https://www.ifsw.org/shop/>).

Additionally, both authors have collaborated on the development and implementation of the IFSW Climate Justice Program with Meredith as Founder and Director, and Sandra as a member of the Global Advisory Council to the

programme. The overall programme is a way for people to take action to redress the injustices we all contribute to with our personal and professional consumption patterns. The IFSW Climate Justice Program aims to: Educate—ourselves and others; Advocate—for changes in policies and practices; Be the Change We Wish to See in the World—by reducing our harmful impacts that lead to climate injustices and supporting projects that create local solutions in communities most impacted by climate injustice.

## PROMOTING AN ECOSOCIAL WORLDVIEW BY TEACHING FUTURE PROFESSIONALS

One of the primary ways we have both been inspired to address these complex issues and centre it in the profession is through teaching future social workers. This role allows us to further explore our worldviews as we engage with current literature and research and seek to impact our students in their professional socialisation processes before they embark on their professional career paths. This not only impacts individuals but has a ripple effect on the wider profession, as those entering their profession bring to it their ecosocial worldview and thereby shape the dynamic profession (Powers, 2016).

**Mainstream social work education tends to teach a narrower, person-in-environment framework, anchored in a human-centric worldview. Thus, one way we embrace the ecosocial worldview and promote it in practice as academics in our teaching, both the content and the process. We teach not only what worldviews are, and how to embrace an ecosocial worldview, but we also seek to create a learning environment that embodies this worldview.**

As noted above, mainstream social work education tends to teach a narrower, person-in-environment framework, anchored in a human-centric worldview. Thus, one way we embrace the ecosocial worldview and promote it in practice as academics in our teaching, both the content *and* the process. We teach not only what worldviews are, and how to embrace an ecosocial worldview, but we also seek to create a learning environment that embodies this worldview. For instance, educators can infuse and integrate content in generalist courses and special electives (Powers, Schmitz, Beckwith Moritz, 2019), as well as explicitly structuring the learning process (e.g., pace and assignments) in courses with an ecosocial worldview in mind.

## CONCLUSION

As we write this, the world at large continues to face complex challenges and injustices. We have approached these wicked problems, primarily by seeking to address our personal healing and seeking collective healing through our work on climate justice. We, despite the increased stress and workloads during this context, have sought to practise our ecosocial worldviews and adopt a sustainable, gratitude-based, life-enhancing pace.

Throughout this paper, we have suggested shifting from the mainstream, human-centric worldview to an ecosocial worldview. We believe mainstream practices and structures do not work and often only serve to create, perpetuate and exacerbate the problems. We chose autoethnography, firstly as it resonated with us as a way to disrupt mainstream, biased forms of research and writing. We see the autoethnographic process as being part of the solution for healing ourselves, for others as individuals, and, ultimately, for climate justice. Secondly, as autoethnographers, we are encouraged to consider how our engagement with our field contributes to our self-understanding (Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013). This collaborative autoethnography process allowed us to create multi-layered narratives and transparently examine *why* we have embraced an ecosocial worldview and *how* that allows us to address wicked problems through a broader understanding of our personal and professional identities as social work academics (including roles and responsibilities). Finally, our collaborative autoethnography journey served as a piece of our radical self-care as we built solidarity and as it allowed us an avenue to contribute to the solutions for the problems that create some of our stress in the first place (Powers & Engstrom, 2020). We collaboratively questioned the mainstream ways of doing things (oftentimes required by our jobs) and disrupt and transform our practices for our healing. We further explored our processes, structures and policies in our classes and community engaged research endeavours which in turn not only addresses climate justice but also promotes healing for our students, community partners. And, we discussed our impact on the profession at large, and ultimately our contributions to the larger actions to promote climate justice in the world.

Much of what we shared in this context of global crises and a pandemic is nicely summarised in this poem by Kitty O'Meara (2020):

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Despite the ongoing tragedies and loss of life due to multiple, intersecting crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been grateful to find space to pause and collaborate on this paper. We hope that our reflections and discussions shared will inspire the reader to reflect on their own worldview, question mainstream policies and practices and inspire further discussions, as we collectively learn and seek to create individual and collective healing and justice.

## REFERENCES

- Amadasun, S, 'Social Work and COVID-19 Pandemic: An Action Call', *International Social Work*, 0020872820959357, 2020
- Berger, R M & Kelly, J J, 'Social Work in the Ecological Crisis', *Social Work*, Vol. 38, No. 5, 1993, pp.521-26
- Besthorn, F, 'Radical Environmentalism and the Ecological Self: Rethinking the Concept of Self-Identity for Social Work Practice', *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002, pp.53-72
- Boetto, H, 'A Transformative Eco-Social Model: Challenging Modernist Assumptions in Social Work', *The British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 1, No. 47, 2017, pp.48-67
- Boetto, H, Bowels, W, Närhi, K & Powers, M C F, 'The Application of Ecosocial Work in Professional Practice: An International Comparison between Australia, Finland and the United States', *International Journal of Social Welfare*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2020
- Bullard, R (ed.), *Unequal Protection*, San Francisco, Sierra Club, 1994
- Canty, J M (ed.), *Ecological and Social Healing: Multicultural Women's Voices*, Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2017
- Chang, H, Ngunjiri, F & Hernandez, K, *Collaborative Autoethnography*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2012
- Coates, J, 'Exploring the Roots of the Environmental Crisis: Opportunity for Social Transformation', *Critical Social Work*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, pp.1-15
- Custer, D, 'Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method', *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 19, 2014, pp.1-13
- D'Alisa, G, Demaria, F & Kallis, G, *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*, London: Routledge, 2014
- Dominelli, L, *Green Social Work: From Environmental Crisis to Environmental Justice*, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012
- Ellis, C, 'Heartful Autoethnography', *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 9, No. 5, 1999, pp. 669-83
- Ellis, C, Adams, T E & Bochner, A P, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2001, pp.273-90

- Ellis, C, 'Carrying the Torch for Autoethnography', in Jones, S H, Adams, T E & Ellis C (eds.), *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2013, pp.9-12
- Engstrom, S, 'Reconnecting with the Earth, in Rinkel, M & Powers, M C F (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol. 2), Switzerland: International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), (2018)
- Engstrom, S, 'Recognising the Role Eco-Grief Plays in Responding to Environmental Degradation', *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2019, pp.181-99
- Engstrom, S, Docherty, P & Robertson, T, *Building a Movement: Community Development and Community Resilience in Response to Extreme Events*, National Centre for Resilience, 2019
- Frank, A W, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010
- Flores, N, 'In education research it is common to discuss «risk factors» that impact academic achievement. But these “risks” are made possible by capitalism, white supremacy and heteronormativity. So maybe instead of talking about “risk factors» weshould discuss “indicators of oppression.» [Twitter Post 1 July 2020], retrieved from <https://twitter.com/nelsonflores/status/1278177532555202561?lang=en> on 9 July 2020
- Germain, C B & Gitterman, A, *The Life Model of Social Work Practice*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980
- Gleick, P, 'Water, Drought, Climate Change, and Conflict in Syria', *Weather, Climate and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2014, pp.331-40
- Gottschall, J, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, New York: Mariner Books, 2013
- Haelle, T, 'Your “Surge Capacity” is Depleted—It’s Why You Feel Awful, *Elemental*, 2020, retrieved from <https://elemental.medium.com/your-surge-capacity-is-depleted-it-s-why-you-feel-awful-de285d542f4c> on 12 November 2020
- Hamilton, M L, Smith, L & Worthington, K, 'Fitting the Methodology with the Research: An Exploration of Narrative, Self-Study and Auto-Ethnography, *Studying Teacher Education*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2008, pp.17-28
- Hirvilammi, T & Helne, T, 'Changing Paradigms: A Sketch for Sustainable Wellbeing and Ecosocial Policy', *Sustainability*, Vol. 6, 2014, pp.2160-75
- International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 'The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitment to Action', 2012, retrieved from <http://www.globalsocialagenda.org/> on 17 November 2015
- Jordan, M & Hinds, J (eds.), *Ecotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, London: Palgrave, 2016
- Kolko, J, *Wicked Problems: Problems Worth Solving*, Austin, TX: Austin Center for Design, 2012
- Lavalette, M, Ioakimidis, V & Ferguson, I (eds.), *Social Work and the COVID-19 Pandemic: International Insights*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2020
- Lorde, A, *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays*, New York: Firebrand Books, 1988



- Macy, J, *World as Lover, World as Self: A Guide to Living Fully in Turbulent Times*, Berkley: Parallax Press, 2007
- Mary, N, *Social Work in a Sustainable World*, Chicago: Lyceum Books, Inc, 2008
- Matthies, A L, Närhi, K & Ward, D (eds.), *The Eco-Social Approach in Social Work*, Jyväskylä, Finland: Sophi Publishers, 2001
- O'Meara, K, *And the People Stayed Home*, Miami, Tra Publishing, 2020.
- Oswald, A, Bussey, S & Thompson, M, 'Disrupting Hegemony in Social Work Doctoral Education and Research: Using Autoethnography to Uncover Possibilities for Radical Transformation', *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol. 1, No. 17, 2020, DOI: 10.1177/1473325020973342
- Peeters, J, 'The Place of Social Work in Sustainable Development: Towards Ecosocial Practice', *International Journal of Social Welfare*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2012, pp.287-98, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2397.2011.00856.x
- Powers, M C F, 'Transforming the Profession: Social Workers' Expanding Response to the Environmental Crisis', in Matthies, A L & Närhi, K (eds.), *Ecosocial Transition of Societies: Contribution of Social Work and Social Policy*, Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2016
- Powers, M C F & Engstrom, S, 'Radical Self-Care for Social Workers in the Global Climate Crisis', *Social Work*, Vol. 65 No. 1, 2020, pp.29-37, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swz043>
- Powers, M C F, Rambare, K & Peeters, J, 'Degrowth for Transformational Alternatives as Radical Social Work Practice', *Critical and Radical Social Work*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2019, pp.417-33, <https://doi.org/10.1332/204986019X15688881497178>
- Powers, M C F & Rinkel, M, 'Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability, within and beyond the UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Degrowth Critique', in Rinkel, M & Powers, M C F (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol.3), Switzerland, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2019, retrieved from <https://www.ifsw.org/product/books/social-work-promoting-community-and-environmental-sustainability-volume-3/> on 15 November 2020
- Powers, M C F & Rinkel, M (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol. 2), Switzerland, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2018, retrieved from <https://www.ifsw.org/product/books/social-work-promoting-community-and-environmental-sustainability-volume-2/> on 15 November 2020
- Powers, M C F, Schmitz, C & Beckwith Moritz, M, 'Preparing Social Workers for Ecosocial Practice and Community Change', *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 27, Nos. 3-4, 2019, doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2019.1657217
- Powers, M C F, Schmitz, C, Matthews, M & Nsonwu, C, 'Environmental Migration: Social Work at the Nexus of Climate Change and Global Migration', *Advances in Social Work*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2018
- Rambaree, K, Powers, M C F & Smith, R J, 'Ecosocial Work and Social Change in Community Practice', *The Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 27, Nos. 3-4, 2019, DOI:10.1080/10705422.2019.1660516



- Raymond, C M, Brown, G & Weber, D, 'The Measurement of Place Attachment: Personal, Community, and Environmental Connections', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol.30, No. 4, 2010, pp.422-34
- Rinkel, M & Mataira, P, 'Developing Critical Self-Awareness to Incorporate Sustainability into Worldviews' in Rinkel, M & Powers, M C F (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol. 2), Rheinfelden, Switzerland: International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2018
- Rinkel, M & Powers, M C F (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol.3), Switzerland, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2019
- Rinkel, M & Powers, M C F (eds.), *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Social Work Practitioners and Educators* (Vol.1), Switzerland, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2017, retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/product/books/social-work-promoting-community-and-environmental-sustainability-free-pdf/> on 18 November 2020
- Schön, D, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, London: Maraca Temple Smith, 1983
- Schultz, K, Walters, K L, Beltran, R, Stroud, S & Johnson-Jennings, M, 'I'm Stronger than I thought: Native Women Reconnecting to Body, Health, and Place', *Health & Place*, Vol.40, 2016, pp.21-28, doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2016.05.001
- Senéhi, J, 'Building Peace: Storytelling to Transform Conflicts Constructively', in Sandole, Dennis J D, Byrne, Sean, Sandole-Staroste, Ingrid & Senéhi, Jessica (eds.), *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, London: Routledge, 2008
- Spencer, M S, Fentress, T, Touch, A & Hernandez, J, 'Environmental Justice, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders', *Human Biology Open Access Pre-Prints*, 176, 2020, retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/humbiol\\_preprints/176](https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/humbiol_preprints/176) on 12 November 2020
- Smith, B, 'Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography', in Silk, M, Andrews, D & Thorpe, H (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies*, 50, Routledge International Handbooks, Routledge, 2017
- Soine, L, 'Expanding the Environment in Social Work: The Case for Including Environmental Hazards Content', *Journal of Social Work Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1987, pp.40-46
- Taber, N, 'Institutional Ethnography, Autoethnography, and Narrative: An Argument for Incorporating Multiple Methodologies', *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2010, pp.5-25
- Taylor, S R, 'We Will Not Go Back to Normal', 2020, retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-fc3ejAlvd/> on 18 November 2020
- Thiébault, P, 'Human Fulfilment and Love of the Universe: A Meditation on Emotion in Korean and Chinese Source', *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2011, pp.57-91
- Wall, S, 'An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, pp.146-60
- Wall Kimmerer, R, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013

- Weick, A, 'Reframing the Person-in-Environment Perspective', *Social Work*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1981, pp.140-43
- World Health Organization (WHO), 2020, retrieved from <https://covid19.who.int/> on 30 November 2020
- Wilson, E O, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Washington DC: Island Press, 1993
- Zapf, M K, *Social Work and the Environment: Understanding People and Place*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2009



**Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis**

<https://jtp.uk>

In association with



Peace and Justice Studies Association

<https://www.peacejusticestudies.org>



# PEACE & JUSTICE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

International Peace Research Association Affiliation

**A professional  
organization  
for scholars,  
practitioners,  
students, &  
activists**

**peacebuilding  
social justice  
conflict transformation**



## **Why join PJSA:**

- **Member-only resources** including job board updated daily, Call for Proposals, career opportunities, mini-grants up to \$1,000, member listserv
- Opportunities to **engage**: Speakers Bureau, External Review, Video Library, Syllabi Repository
- Research, career, and teaching **consultations** for emerging scholars
- Discounts for our annual **conference** & access to **two** association journals

***Join or  
Renew Your  
Membership  
Today!***

---

***visit us @  
[peacejusticestudies.org/  
membership](https://peacejusticestudies.org/membership)***

For further details, visit us at [peacejusticestudies.org](https://peacejusticestudies.org)